

AN INQUIRY INTO THE VALUE OF NURSERY RHYMES  
IN THE READING READINESS PROGRAM  
FOR THE PRIMARY CHILD

FRANCES LEE JOHNSON







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AN INQUIRY INTO THE VALUE OF NURSERY RHYMES  
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FOR THE PRIMARY CHILD

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Statement of Acceptance of  
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The undersigned members of the reading committee of  
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Into the Value of Nursery Rhymes in the Reading Readiness  
Program For the Primary Child.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED.....	1
	The Problem.....	1
	General Statement.....	1
	Statement of the Problem.....	1
	Delimitations.....	1
	Importance of the Study.....	2
	Definitions of the Terms Used.....	3
	Nursery Rhymes.....	3
	Cultural Heritage.....	3
	Reading Readiness.....	3
	Primary Child.....	4
	Language Development.....	4
II	HISTORY OF THE NURSERY RHYME.....	5
	Origin.....	5
	Early Collectors of Nursery Rhymes.....	9
	Modern Nursery Rhymes.....	12
III	LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT BY THE USE OF NURSERY RHYMES.....	17
	Nursery Rhymes From Birth Until Two.....	17
	Nursery Rhymes For the Two Year Old.....	21
	Nursery Rhymes For the Three Year Old.....	25



CHAPTER	PAGE
Nursery Rhymes For the Four Year Old.....	28
Nursery Rhymes For the Five Year Old.....	30
IV USING NURSERY RHYMES IN THE READING	
READINESS PROGRAM.....	34
Reading Readiness.....	34
Factors in Reading Readiness.....	35
Methods and Techniques Used in Teaching	
Rhymes.....	44
Introduction to Rhymes.....	45
Teaching "Jack Be Nimble".....	47
Teaching "Jack and Jill".....	52
Teaching "See-Saw Marjorie Daw".....	58
Teaching "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary".....	59
Teaching "Polly, Put the Kettle On".....	62
Teaching "Little Jack Horner".....	66
Teaching "Humpty Dumpty".....	68
Teaching "Little Bopeep".....	69
Teaching "Little Boy Blue".....	70
Teaching "Baa-Baa Black Sheep".....	72
Teaching "Old Woman in a Shoe".....	73
Test That May Accompany the Study of	
Rhymes.....	74
Summary.....	76
Program Which Evolves From Use of Nursery	
Rhymes.....	76
Planning the Program.....	76



CHAPTER	PAGE
Values of Program.....	77
"A Nursery Rhyme Pantomine".....	77
MAIN CONCLUSIONS.....	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90





## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

#### I. THE PROBLEM

General Statement. The purpose of this investigation is to contribute some helpful information as to the value of nursery rhymes in the reading readiness program for the primary child.

Statement of the Problem. Any general consideration of the value of nursery rhymes in relation to the reading readiness program resolves into an analysis of three subordinate questions: (1) History of the Nursery Rhymes, (2) Language Development by Use of the Nursery Rhymes, (3) Using Nursery Rhymes in a Six Weeks Reading Readiness Program.

#### II. DELIMITATIONS

The reading readiness program is a large field and it is too huge to permit full consideration of all phases in this thesis. The examiner realizes nursery rhymes are not the only means of building a vocabulary but they should be used more extensively and intelligently. For this reason, the examiner will choose what she considers relevant to the subject and discuss it briefly. Her choice will be tempered by the judgment of child psychologists and educators who have noted the successful use of nursery rhymes in their study and training of



children.

### III. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

For many centuries nursery rhymes have been handed down from one generation to another until they have become a part of our cultural heritage. Educators used nursery rhymes in their teaching procedures until the progressive system was born; at this time they swung to the extreme, using the social materials and neglecting the wealth of materials in rhymes. Modern educators saw the fallacy of this and revived their use. They have interwoven the rhymes with the everyday occurrences of the child's life. Beautiful new books have been published using as the basis of their content the stories and rhymes of the past. Modern educators realize that to understand our present one must understand the past, as all of our values are mingled with the past, and through the study of simple nursery rhymes one may more fully understand and appreciate it.

Above everything it is desired that the child develop into a happy, alert, well-balanced individual. The mental diet you select for the child will determine his thoughts and actions and help to mold his personality. The conversation the child hears, the experiences he has, the stories and rhymes read to him are all part of his mental diet and will greatly influence his thoughts and actions. By using the proper nursery rhymes the child will be challenged by the truth, honesty, courage, and adventure of the characters read to him. The rhymes selected will attract, interest, and offer him patterns for living.



#### IV. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Nursery Rhymes. The first question brought up is what we mean by nursery rhymes. We mean those rhymes, ditties and jingles, and nonsense verse that have been recited or sung to children time out of mind. The most universal of them are sporadic and have grown out of the universal personal relation of mother and child--others are the debris of ancient folklore, bits of old ballads, rhyming and therefore easily remembered, riddles, proverbs, etcetera, that have caught the ear of infancy.

Cultural Heritage. The second question brought up by the study of nursery rhymes is what contributions they make to our cultural heritage. Goethe says, "The youth must always begin anew at the beginning, and as an individual traverse the epochs of the world's culture." The child cannot directly assimilate or appreciate the highest and best in life about him. He can rise progressively to it by living through the significant and valuable factors of the past stages out of which the present has evolved: the earlier being the simpler, are better adapted to the child--to his apperceptive masses and his interest.

Rhymes and jingles afford the appropriate nurture for the earliest period. These set a foundation for the appreciation of modern history and literature of the later years.

Reading Readiness. The third question to be considered is what is meant by reading readiness. It is a period of development generally less than a grade in length; for example, the pre-primer or readiness stage, primer stage and first reader stage. During the readiness stage activities are used for the purpose



of developing an aptitude for reading. There must be a willingness, desire, and ability to engage in a given activity--depending on the learner's level of maturity, previous experiences, and mental and emotional set. The readiness stage is usually understood to imply a chronological age of six years and an intelligence quotient of 100 and no special handicaps.

Primary Child. The fourth question deals with the primary child. This is the child who is in the first three grades of school. Reading readiness is customarily presented in the first weeks of school; therefore, this thesis is concerned with the child who is just entering school and carrying him through the first weeks.

Language Development. Speech is one of the most valuable mechanisms that man possesses. Through it he is able to communicate with others, to express desires to others so that they may act in a congenial fashion, to receive impressions from them, and to leave graphic records for future generations. Besides its value for communication, it provides a means of solving more quickly the various problems of life. Speech furnishes abstract symbols and short cuts in reasoning and imagination which have been of untold value.

The child in school finds it necessary to learn a vast body of ideas and words which go with those ideas. These ideas are at first very simple in character. Plato said, "You know--that the beginning is the most important part of any work." What better way can a child learn the meanings and uses of words than through the nursery rhymes?





## CHAPTER II

### HISTORY OF THE NURSERY RHYME

#### I. Origin

To trace the exact history of the nursery rhyme would be impossible because they have been exchanged and interwoven into the history of the world. For many centuries these rhymes have been handed down from one generation to another until many of them are believed to be of "dateless antiquity."<sup>1</sup>

Nursery rhymes have been popular ever since the time King Cole, or Coal, was supposed to have ruled Britain.<sup>2</sup> Court Jesters recited them. They were printed in many of the cheap little books called chapbooks. They contained rhymes, stories, and sayings. King Cole was a king who is supposed to have reigned in the A. D. 200's. He left behind him in the city of Cole- hester a great natural amphitheater called "King Cole's Kitchen." King Cole would have been long forgotten if it were not for his rhyme.

Out of the long dispute between England and Wales over the possession of two counties, Cornwall and Monmouth, has come a jingle about the Welshman, Taffy:

Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief;

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1. Miriam B. Huber, Story and Verse for Children, p. 49.
  2. World Book, Encyclopedia, Vol. M, p. 5274.



Taffy came to my house and stole a piece of beef.  
 I went to Taffy's house, Taffy wasn't home;  
 Taffy came to my house and stole a marrow bone;  
 I went to Taffy's house, Taffy was in bed;  
 I took up the marrow bone and flung it at his head.

American mothers have been singing lullabies to their babies since earliest days. One in particular was first supposedly sung in a slightly different form to James the First when he was a child. James had only a slight hold on the Scottish throne, and people jokingly sang this song about him:

Hushabve baby on the tree top,  
 When the wind blows the cradle will rock.  
 When the bough bends the cradle will fall  
 And down will come cradle, baby and all.

A second lullaby is also claimed for James I:  
 Rock a bye baby, the cradle is green;  
 Father's a nobleman, mother's a queen;  
 Betty's a lady and wears a gold ring,  
 And Johnny's a drummer and drums for the king.

The nursery rhyme "London Bridge" was sung by English children long ago. The song became "Charlestown Bridge" to American children of colonial times and the "Brooklyn Bridge" to children of a later age.

The song was a gay plan for the rebuilding of the London Bridge. It had been destroyed in the 1000's by King Olaf, the Norseman, in the battle with King Ethelred of Saxony. The bridge was very important to the people of that time because



it was the only one across the Thames River in London. The song has surprisingly good logic in suggesting how the new bridge should be built.

The rhyme of Little Jack Horner has an interesting history.<sup>3</sup> It is a tale of dishonest dealings in the days of King Henry VII of England. But there is more to the story than appears in the rhyme. It seems that a man by the name of John Horner, a steward of Glastonbury, England, was sent to London with a pie for the king. Title deeds for several estates in Somersetshire County were baked in the pie. The greedy John Horner stuck in his thumb before he got to London. In other words, he stole the king's plum, which was the land deed for the Abbey of Mells, the estate formerly belonging to the Church of England. Another story is that Queen Jane's brother, Edward Seymour, received a pie in the 1500's from which some valuable papers had been stolen.

This legend seems more believable when we know that papers were often baked in pies at this time. It was a favorite trick of the 1500's to hide surprises of all kinds in pies. A rare old book of recipes tells a similar tale. It instructs a chef to make pies with live birds in them so they may fly out when the pie is cut. This is probably the origin of the famous nursery rhyme, "Sing a Song of Six Pence."

Military movements are also described in nursery rhymes.<sup>4</sup>

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3. World Book, Encyclopedia, Vol. N, p. 5798.

4. Ibid., p. 5799.



This is one written before 1588, but no one knows what event it tells about:

The King of France with twenty thousand men,  
Went up the hill and then came down again.  
The King of Spain with twenty thousand more,  
Climbed the same hill the French had climbed before.

Several jingles were made up when the kings from the House of Hanover took over the English throne in 1714. A political party called the Jacobites supported James III for the crown. They considered that George of Hanover was a German who had no right to be King of England. They recited the rhyme "Hark, Hark the Dogs so Bark" when George became King George I and put on the royal robes.

Another rhyme about the same two candidates for king shows what the Jacobites were thinking:

Jim and George were two great lords,  
They fought all in a churn;  
And when that Jim got George by the nose,  
Then George began to girn (whine).

The same George of Hanover is the subject of another interesting rhyme. This one may shed some light on his friendship with the women of the court of England.

Georgy Forgey, pudding and pie,  
Kissed the girls and made them cry,  
Then the boys came out to play,  
Georgy Forgey ran away.

"Mary, Mary Quite Contrary" is supposed to express the





bitterness of the people against Bloody Mary Tudor: the "garden," so it is said, refers to the burying place of Mary's ruthless executed political prisoners; "silver bells and cockleshells" represent her fanatical devotion to the church; and the "pretty maids all in a row" are the ladies of the court.

"Baa, Baa, Black Sheep" dates back to the time of the wool monopolies in England, when only "my master and my dame," the wealthy, were able to afford the comfort of wool clothing, and there was none for the poor "little boy who lives in the lane."<sup>5</sup>

## II. Early Collectors of Nursery Rhymes

Orally current for centuries this "light literature of the infant scholar"<sup>6</sup> was not collected until about 1696. A French writer, Charles Perrault,<sup>7</sup> published a book entitled "Tales of Mother Goose."

Perrault was a member of the French Academy and the author of numerous serious works now forgotten. After the tales were finished, he was evidently ashamed of his lighthearted detours from the prescribed gravity of academic paths so he signed them with the name of his son Perrault Darmancour. This book proved very popular and was soon translated into English. In this way the name Mother Goose became known to English children.

In 1760 John Newbery, Oliver Goldsmith's friend and publisher, brought out in London a book of nursery rhymes and

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5. Annis Duff, "This is the Key of the Kingdom," Monograph No. 33, Row, Peterson and Company, p. 6.
  6. Paul Monroe, A Cyclopedia of Education, p. 501.
  7. Mayhill Arbuthnot, Children and Books, p. 17.



jingles. Knowing the popularity that the name Mother Goose had gained through the works of Perrault he transferred the name of Mother Goose to his book, and from that time on Mother Goose has stood to the English speaking world for old nursery rhymes.

It is to this author and publisher that the title of "Father of Literature for Children" has been accorded.<sup>8</sup> This honor rests upon the publication of his book entitled "A Mother Goose Melody" or "Sonnets for the Cradle in Two Parts." "Part I," ran the title, "contains the songs and lullabies from the lips of old British nurses. Part II those of that sweet songster and nurse of wit and humor Master Wm. Shakespeare, embellished with cuts and illustrated with notes and maxims, historical, philosophical, and critical."<sup>9</sup> Soon books which copied this one of John Newbery began to flood London's book stalls.

In 1785, Isaiah Thomas, a publisher in Worcester, Massachusetts, published a book which was undoubtedly a pirated reprint of the John Newbery edition. There were no copyright laws then.

This collecting went through a few editions and then under the influence of the dreary tendencies of the time, the nursery rhymes were neglected for a long period in books, though they continued to live in the hearts of the children and in the hearts and minds of their mothers and nurses.

Two more notable American editions succeeded the Isaiah Thomas publication of 1785. Between 1825 and 1827, the Boston

8. Blanche E. Weekes, Literature and the Child, p. 54.

9. Munroe, op. cit., p. 512.



firm of Munroe and Francis published the "Mother Goose Quarto" which contained many rhymes drawn from the Thomas reprint of Newbery's Melody but also many apparently old ones printed for the first time. In 1833 this firm made a reprint of the Quarto with the title, "The Only True Mother Goose Melodies." Fortunately, the second edition of these rare early editions has been made available in a modern facsimile edition which begins with an introduction by Edward Everett Hale. It contains one hundred and sixty-nine rhymes illustrated with interesting woodcuts. Both the Quarto and 1833 editions are important sources for many of the later collections. These editions tended more than anything else to keep nursery rhymes alive in this country.

The verses included several fairly long poems: "You owe me five shillings, say the bells of St. Helen's" and "London Bridge" have eleven verses each. "'Twas once upon a time, when Jenny Wren was Young" is quite a long story, and "We'll go to the wood, says Richard to Robin" covers two of the small pages. This collection also has such songs as "Johnny shall have a new bonnet" and "Lavender blue, Rosemary green."

With the beginning of interest in folklore, the nursery rhymes naturally attracted the attention of students and collectors. James O. Halliwell was commissioned by the Percy Society, a learned society in England, to make a collection. In 1841 he printed his first collection, "Popular Rhymes and Nursery Tales."<sup>10</sup> Halliwell has enriched his collection of

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10. Weekes, op. cit., p. 106.



nursery rhymes and jingles with many valuable notes and his handbook has been the storehouse from which all the later collections of nursery rhymes have been taken. Although he utilized the collections already made, there is no doubt that many of the rhymes in his book were collected for the first time from oral tradition, as his collection is much larger than any others of that time. At a later date Mrs. Valentine compiled a book "The Nursery Rhymes" called the Camden Edition, which included Halliwell's notes and nearly all the illustrations that had been made up to that time. It is now out of print and scarce.

In 1889, W. H. Whitmore,<sup>11</sup> an American collector, reproduced Isaiah Thomas' collection entitled "The Original Mother Goose Melody." This book may well be a reproduction of Newbery's edition of "Mother Goose."

### III. Modern Nursery Rhymes

Many learned men and women have given loving study to the collection of these old familiar rhymes. They have discovered, however, that the value of the rhymes could be enhanced by the use of more suitable illustrations. The nursery rhyme books are being rated more and more by their illustrations.

One edition no child should miss is "Ring o' Roses" or "Nursery Rhyme" illustrated by Leslie Brooke. He has the happy gift of portraying the humorous in a way to delight children.

11. Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 34.





Children will be glad that he spared time from his portrait painting to illustrate the old rhymes.

Another of the illustrators is Kate Greenaway. Her book "The Old Nursery Rhymes" is small and fits small hands and pockets and fills small hearts with delight. It contains about fifty of the brief rhymes, each with its own picture. They have a strong appeal because of the quaint, lovely child characters she portrays, usually in a costume which became known as "Kate Greenaway"--high waisted, long skirted little dresses, with puffed sleeves, and worn with a sort of poke bonnet or else a frilly cap. Her illustrations were the first to demonstrate that pictures of children could be delightful to children.<sup>12</sup> The print is exceedingly fine but for the non-reader that does not matter. This small volume is a treasure of fine bookmaking.

H. Willebeek Le Mair of Holland created some charming pictures for two little volumes of rhymes set to music, "Our Nursery Rhymes" and "Little Songs of Long Ago." She painted in soft, delicate tones with much attention to detail, creating pictures of fragile beauty.<sup>13</sup> At first sight adults are likely to think them too ethereal to be popular with young children, but popular they are. Homes should own at least one of these books and so should kindergartens.

"The Old Nursery Rhymes" illustrated by Arthur Rackham, one of England's artists, is less popular in this country than

12. Miriam B. Huber, Story and Verse for Children, p. 30.

13. Weekes, op. cit., p. 137.



it deserves to be because one or two of the pictures are a little gruesome. It contains an authentic collection of nursery rhymes, and the pictures show imagination and a knowledge of folklore.

One of the best editions for the child's introduction to nursery rhymes is the tried and true "The Real Mother Goose," illustrated by Blanche Fisher Wright, who realized the value of an array of colorful pictures. There are colored pictures on every page; often one picture covers a whole page, or sometimes there are two or three smaller ones. The pictures are clear and simple and have only a few effective details. Having pictures that really illustrate is more important for young children than some artists have realized, because little children use pictures as clues to the meaning of the rhyme. "The Real Mother Goose" is an all-round satisfactory edition for young children to start with, and it is continuously popular with nursery schools, kindergartens, and homes.

"Favorite Nursery Songs," illustrated by Felagie Doane, is a very attractive book. It includes twenty-six old favorites with ten color plates and many drawings. The music is simplified for the piano, and from "Rock-a-bye Baby" to "The Mulberry Bush" the songs are easy for beginners. The pictures show real children who might live next door, except for the peasant touch to the costumes, which adds charm rather than strangeness.

Berta and Elmer Hader's "Picture Book of Mother Goose" is another favorite. The book contains a small number of the traditional rhymes (not always the best known versions); a group



of traditional singing games with music; and a section devoted to lullabies, both old and comparatively modern.

"The Rooster Crows; A Book of American Rhymes and Jingles," by Maud and Miska Petersham, is a collection of recent rhymes. Maud is an American and Miska is a Hungarian. The sub-title is difficult to justify in spite of inclusion of such American folk rhymes as "A Bear Went Over the Mountain" and "Mother, May I Go Out to Swim," for the collection contains also such old-world rhymes as "Dally Waters," "Oats, Peas, Beans and Barley Grows," and many others. The pictures are delightful. Children like the colts, kittens, and bunnies which adorn the pages, and the spirited pictures of children of long ago rocking wooden cradles or going-a-hunting and of modern children jumping off haymows and enjoying themselves generally.

It is tempting to sight still other collections of rhymes but those mentioned are sufficient to prove that a love for rhymes is as wide spread, as age old, and as deeply rooted as anything in human nature. Most adults recall with happiness their first excursions into the magic world of talking animals, giants, dragons, and enchanted princesses. Those who say they never liked nursery rhymes even as children have perhaps forgotten that they listened in babyhood to "The House That Jack Built" and "The Old Woman Whose Pig Would Not Get Over the Stile So She Could Not Get Home That Night."

In the last decade people have begun to realize the importance of training the child's mind. Books have been written just for children. Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry Wadsworth



Longfellow, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and many others have written entertaining, educational, and appealing verse for children. These rhymes and jingles are being absorbed into the old and will in the future be a part of the folklore of America.





### CHAPTER III

#### LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT BY THE USE OF NURSERY RHYMES

The exact time to present each nursery rhyme can be a debatable question, but the rhythm and melody of the rhymes will always make the rhymes acceptable to children even if the content of the rhymes is not understandable. Anne Eaton<sup>14</sup> states that the very first book of all to be bought, read aloud, and, as soon as the child is old enough, put into his hand is a volume of nursery rhymes. Dipping into the volume here and there the mother refreshes her memory of jingles partially forgotten, and she is preparing herself to help the child take his first step into the literary world.

This chapter deals with the rhymes which will probably be suitable for the child at a given age. The early fingerplay rhymes will help satisfy the child's natural instinct for play and action. The later rhymes will encourage the qualities of alertness and curiosity that are so important in any individual. They will all provide an extensive listening vocabulary which is so necessary for reading readiness.

##### I. Nursery Rhymes From Birth Until Two

The baby's vocabulary truly begins the moment he hears a

14. Anne T. Eaton, Reading With Children, p. 42.



word spoken. Mother talks and sings to him for months with no expectations that he will immediately use the language he hears. By the process of constant repetition he begins to understand words, and later he attempts to reproduce them.

Angelo Patri<sup>15</sup> says, "Children gain their first hint of language and all that belongs to it by listening. If the first tones he hears are clear, clean-cut and musical, his language will follow that pattern closely."

Since children learn to use language by listening, the wise parent will take every precaution to see that the baby forms good habits of speech. If you expose your baby to good speech from the very beginning, he will come to accept it as his own and pattern his language after the words and sounds he hears. Smiley Blanton<sup>16</sup> believes that the child carries through life not only the language of the group in which he is reared, but also, to a certain extent, the language of the individual who cares for him most constantly through the first years of life. If this person is his mother, he is likely to have the accent of his mother. If it is someone else, then her dialectic sounds will color it.

Baby talk and talking down to the child, instead of talking with him, may hamper his desire and ability to use language. Begin by saying and singing some of the choice lullabies and rhymes to him and you will be providing the words, phrases, and

15. Angelo Patri, School and Home, p. 72.

16. Smiley Blanton, Child Guidance, p. 98, as quoted by Ruth May Strang, et al, An Introduction to Child Study, p. 107.



sentences that will form his listening vocabulary. Some of these old songs and rhymes are:

Bye Baby Bunting

I Saw a Ship a Sailing

Bobby Shaftoe's Gone to Sea

Little Pussy

In her book Luella Palmer<sup>17</sup> points out that the baby's ability to understand and use language is very closely tied up with his sensory experiences--his experiences with hearing, feeling, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling. John Dewey believes that the senses are invitations to knowledge.<sup>18</sup>

The baby uses his senses to become familiar with the things around him. He becomes aware of his nose, ears, eyes, mouth, toes, and hair by touching them. He learns about mother's dress and the shape and composition of his bottle and rattle from touching them with his little fingers. He learns to recognize the different sounds around him, his rattle, the bark of the dog, the sound of the voices of the people who care for his needs, by listening. From the very beginning he associates security or annoyance with the tone of voice he hears. He uses his sense of smell to help identify his baby powder, orange juice, and so forth. It is well known that his sense of taste serves to satisfy his curiosity when all other senses have failed him. Although the baby gets many other impressions through his sense

17. Luella A. Palmer, Play Life in the First Eight Years, p. 5.

18. Ludd M. Spivey, College President, Lecture on Reconstruction of Philosophy, October 25, 1948, Florida Southern College.



of sight--as soon as he discovers light and dark form and color--he depends on this sense less than the adult.

Sensory experiences are very valuable to the baby, not only because they make the senses keener, but because they train the mind to pay attention to the impressions gained through eye, ear, and hand, and also train the body to respond to these with intelligence, quickness, and accuracy. These impressions gained by the sensory experiences urge him to express himself in sound and action. He can amuse himself endlessly by examining his toes and fingers. He thoroughly enjoys having mother talk to him and repeat lilting lullabies and jingles that call for action with his own fingers and toes.

Baby authorities agree that the baby must first master certain body movements before he is ready to learn to walk and talk. Finger plays and simple games where the baby plays an active part provide opportunities for him to gain control of his body and encourage good disposition qualities in him. He must pay very close attention to mother if he wants to hear, see, and do things mother is doing as she plays with him. He learns early to detect changes in the sound of her voice and to follow her motions.

The following finger plays and simple games are especially adapted to this age:

This Little Pig Went to Market

The Little Calf

Fat-a-cake

Jack and Jill





Herè's a Ball for Baby

Hickory Dickory Dock

These and many others will encourage the baby to enter into activity spontaneously.

### Summary

Finger plays will help develop alertness in the young child and he soon comes to associate certain actions with the sound of words and phrases he hears mother repeat in rhymes and jingles. It is very important that the language the child hears from the beginning be rhythmical, clean-cut, and musical because speech habits are bound to be formed at an early age, and, if they are incorrect ones, it will be almost impossible to break them.<sup>19</sup> The love of good language will color the child's impressions, and his own speech will reflect the same qualities he has heard from birth.

At two the child should be able to use five or more words and understand simple questions. He should be able, when asked, to point to his eyes, ears, nose, and other parts of the body. He should be able to say "Thank you," "Hello," "Bye-bye," or the equivalent.

### II. Nursery Rhymes For the Two Year Old

This is often called the transition period and the child is appropriately called the "infant-child."<sup>20</sup> The second year

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19. Arnold Gesell, The Normal Child and Primary Education, p. 171.

20. Arnold Gesell, Infant and Child in the Culture of Today, p. 35.



is fundamental and critical in so many ways that books could be written about what should and should not be done.

One of the first duties is to see that the child is exposed to desirable disposition qualities in the home. The urge to be cheerful, thoughtful, and friendly is caught rather than taught. "Well begun is well done."

At this time a child shows spontaneous affection, signs of pity, sympathy, modesty, and shame. He pouts when he is scolded, smiles when praised, and shows evidence of guilt when he has broken a dish and may hang his head in disgrace. He is becoming conscious of the family group, and he is almost in complete possession of his rather concentrated love.<sup>21</sup> He has a rudimentary sense of ownership; he holds on to possessions--even hides them.<sup>22</sup> He can do simple tasks such as getting the paper, picking up his toys, and pointing to people. Much of this is pure imitation, but some of it also expresses his reaction to definite situations and relationships.

He is fond of rhythms and likes to hum and sing. The reading aloud of nursery rhymes combined with well chosen pictures is increasingly valuable as it may be gradually grasped by the child. He now uses simple sentences, sing-songy rhythm and sound patterns which lie at the bottom of syntax and belong to music and poetry. No wonder he enjoys rhymes which clink and tinkle with two year old sound patterns. He now smiles in

21. Winifred Rand, Growth and Development of the Young Child, p. 169.

22. Gesell, op. cit., p. 35.



recognition when he hears the same nursery rhyme over and over again. Not only does the child profit by this repetition, but he actually likes and appreciates it.

Now you find the child wants all of himself used in the play. The "jog a trot" rhythmic rhymes are the best to use; besides giving the child the feel of all sorts of rhythms, it helps him to learn to adjust his balance. Luella Palmer<sup>23</sup> believes that the best education for the child is the opportunity to be as active as he wishes.

A long line of children must have used the jogging and trotting rhymes, for verses to use with them keep cropping up in every new book of nursery rhymes that is published. Besides "Ride-a-cock horse," "This is the way the ladies ride," and "To market to buy a fat pig," familiar in most homes, other favorites are:

A farmer went trotting upon his gray mare,

Bumpety, bumpety, bump!

With his daughter behind him so rosy and fair,

Lumpety, lumpety, lump!

I had a little nag

That trotted up and down.

I bridled him and saddled him

And trotted out of town.

And to put an end to play that has become too strenuous,

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23. Luella Palmer, Play Life in the First Eight Years, p. 33.



here is a rhyme which allows for all kinds of interpretive actions:

John Cook he had a little gray mare,  
 Hee, haw, hum,  
 Her legs were long and her back was bare,  
 Hee, haw, hum,  
 John Cook was riding up Shooter's Bank,  
 Fee, haw, hum,  
 The mare she began to kick and prank,  
 Hee, haw, hum,  
 John Cook was riding up Shooter's Hill,  
 Fee, haw, hum,  
 The mare fell down and made her will,  
 Hee, haw, hum,  
 The bridle and saddle were laid on the shelf,  
 Hee, haw, hum,  
 If you want any more you may sing it yourself,  
 Hee, haw, hum.

#### Summary

It is impossible to predict reliably the vocabulary of an individual child but at the end of this period Gesell<sup>24</sup> believes the child should have knowledge of about 300 words with the command of only a few. He is beginning to use words such as "me," "my," "it," etc., showing that he identifies himself as

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 24. Arnold Gesell, The First Five Years of Life, p. 383.





distinct from others. He should be able to hold a book and know that it has something to look at! There is no question but that the wise stimulation by parents and members of the family in the line of combining appropriate pictures with words will greatly aid his growth. The child's vocabulary depends greatly upon his opportunities for language development in his environment.

Wide-awake parents should, at this time more than ever, realize that the tree will grow and develop according to the way in which the natural needs of the seedlings are being met.<sup>25</sup>

### III. Nursery Rhymes For The Three Year Old

Three is a "coming of age."<sup>26</sup> He moves around quite freely now and is continuously investigating and exploring. He tries more and more to understand his environment and to comply with cultural demands. He is meeting up with natural events and nature. He notices plants growing, diversity of color, the cat and dog jumping, sleeping, and behaving in various ways. He notices rain, thunder, and lightning; change of the seasons; and the stars and the moon. His childish mind will be delighted with the explanation of this complicated world by the use of fitting nursery rhymes:

Butterflies, Butterflies

Robin Red Breast

Star Light, Star Bright

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25. Martha May Reynolds, Children From Seed to Seedlings, p. 169.

26. Arnold Gesell, Infant and Child in the Culture of Today, p. 202.



Rain, Rain, Go Away

Black Clouds

Clouds

Naturally, his curiosity grows in leaps and bounds, and he is capable of questioning all around him. The child's questions will reflect his thinking and his attempts to reason. They give him an opportunity to practice language; he will formulate small sentences and increase his vocabulary. He is now building a definite vocabulary for social understanding and wants to help in everything that everybody in the family does.

Now, the child listens to words with increasing assurance and insight. He has learned to listen to adults and he listens to learn from them.<sup>27</sup> Rhymes and stories can be depended upon to hold his interest and to keep him absorbed more than they did previously. He likes to make acquaintance with new words and to grasp meanings from them. He will retell rhymes, keeping the book before him as if he actually reads. He wants to hear the same things over and over again and will correct the reader if any change in wordings are introduced.<sup>28</sup> The wisdom of the ages being embodied in nursery rhymes and folklore, the child may have his world of ideas and experiences greatly expanded at this time by graded reading material.

In his personal habits he can now wash his hands unaided and button his coat. In performing some of the homely techniques

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27. Ibid., p. 203.

28. Ruth May Strang, An Introduction to Child Study, p. 107.



--washing, dressing, good eating habits, and so on--have been relieved of tedium for the child if attention is shifted just enough to lighten the labor without interfering with concentration.<sup>29</sup> It is much more fun for the child just learning to manage his own clothes for instance, if he hears, along with his directions, something like this:

Johnny Shall Have a New Bonnet

My Sipper Suit is Bunny Brown

Old Shoes

Rhymes that have the barest connection with what you happen to be doing often seem to children miraculously made to order. For instance when the child is taking a bath:

Rub a Dub Dub

Pump Pump Pump

I Put My Left Foot In

Rhymes are fine for mealtime too:

Knock at the Door

Emotionally he now expresses jealousy and anger and might have temper tantrums.<sup>30</sup> Often a genuine effort at control of tears or temper is made if, instead of admonishment, the little rebel hears something like this:

There Was a Little Girl

Oh, Dear, What Can the Matter Be

Suppose My Little Lady

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29. Annis Duff, This is the Keys of the Kingdom, p. 7.

30. Winifred Rand, Growth and Development of the Young Child, p. 294.



Thus he learns manners without tears and morals without a sermon.

### Summary

Curiosity and questioning are a natural part of the child's growth. Through his question and answer method the child has built up a vocabulary of 1000 words. His sentences are more expressive of his thoughts. He has a high interest in poetry especially rhyming.<sup>31</sup>

We must be patient with the child and show him attention and affection, thus giving him a feeling of security. We must enhance his world by stories, pictures, and new experiences inside and outside of the home. We must help him when he needs it but let him do what he can for himself so that he may develop self-assurance and self-reliance.

### IV. Nursery Rhymes For the Four Year Old

At four the child is intellectually busy with many things but not profoundly absorbed with any one thing in particular. "Questioning is at its peak"<sup>32</sup> in the four year old, and it will be less puzzling for you to answer his questions if you realize that they do not reflect a hunger for knowledge but rather an impulse to build up meaning about the things around him. His inquiring mind has little knowledge of the past and future, so your answers must suit his needs at the moment.

31. Arnold Gesell, Infant and Child in the Culture of Today, p. 234.

32. Arnold Gesell, The First Five Years of Life, pp. 46-52.





At this age one question seems to invite another, and the child may not even wait until you have answered one question until he frames another. Even the child's response to a question is likely to be a question.<sup>33</sup> He gains better control of language through asking questions and adds clauses and adjectives and adverbs to his vocabulary. Very often there is no answer to the four year old's questions, and a rhyme that infers the answer will satisfy him best. The child who questions you about the wind will be more interested in a rhyme that tells about its usefulness than in a scientific explanation. For example:

Blow, Wind, Blow and Go, Mill, Go!

Choose a rhyme to answer his questions and you will not only satisfy his curiosity but you will expose him to additional details that he will want to observe for himself.

Often the child is reputed to indulge in fabrications of "tall tales" by adult standards. These stories, however, just denote his growing imagination, and we must be careful in gradually and intelligently making him aware of the difference between fiction and reality. The adult should enjoy momentarily these "tall tales" and then bring them into perspective by pointing out the difference between the real and imaginary.<sup>34</sup>

In his play activity the child now tends to play with other children rather than along side of them as he did earlier. Here is the place to introduce singing nursery rhymes such as:

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33. Ruth May Strang, An Introduction to Child Study, p. 164.

34. Arnold Gesell, The Normal Child and Primary Education, p. 244.



Ring Around the Roses

The Farmer's in the Dell

Lazv Ole Mary

The child will also like to use his imagination in dramatizing the nursery rhymes. Some of these may be:

Three Little Kittens

Little Miss Muffet

Modeling in clay at this age will give the child an opportunity to express himself. He will tell you many interesting details about his finished clay object if your attitude is sympathetic and understanding. Gesell<sup>35</sup> states, "Modeling for the child is language and therefore educative."

#### Summary

The child should now have a vocabulary of around 2000 words.<sup>36</sup> This increase in vocabulary is an index of maturity and also in a measure an index of intelligence. His speech implies abstract thinking. He can make puns and converse logically.

At this stage of the child's growth, we should acquaint him with the animal world and his physical surroundings in order to eradicate fear.

#### V. Nursery Rhymes For the Five Year Old

The period of early childhood is coming to a relative close

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35. Ibid., p. 128.

36. Ruth May Strang, An Introduction to Child Study, p. 166.



at five years. He is at the "little man stage"<sup>37</sup> and he will appear to be quite adult in his mannerisms. He is more agile now and is a ready pupil for dancing and physical exercise. In his speech he shows definite evidences of politeness and tact, another indication of increasing sociability. He has mastered the grammatical intricacies of the language and expresses himself in complete sentences. His vocabulary has increased by fifty per cent since the age of four, mostly because of his aggressiveness in the neighborhood.

In answering questions he is briefer and more to the point than a year earlier. His own questions are fewer and more relevant. He is less inclined to ramble. By five, he no longer asks questions merely for attention and practice in speaking but makes serious inquiries. His questions have immediate application to the world around him. He wants to know what things are for and what they do. An auto is to ride in, a book is to look at, a telephone is for talking to someone who is not there and a spoon is for eating.

He pays a good deal of attention to details. He can isolate the particular word or phrase in conversation that puzzles him rather than reacting to the statement as a whole. For example:

All the cats consulted

What was it about?

How to catch a mouse

Running in and out.

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37. Gesell, op. cit., p. 52.



When the child hears consulted in the rhyme, he notes the word, rolls it around in his mouth for a time, asks for a meaning, it becomes a picture in his mind, and then a permanent word in his vocabulary.

His appreciation of time and the duration of events develops. He can retell an experience getting the events in order. He can narrate a long tale.<sup>38</sup> He may even "read" pictures of books. He will carry out his play activities from one day to the next and he shows a memory for remote events and places. Yesterday and tomorrow take on a definite meaning for him.

Now is the time to give the small child daily duties to perform. He will be able to put his toys away in an orderly manner.<sup>39</sup> Individual parents will know best which tasks to give their child. It is a safe statement that if a child is not trained to definite duties, we may later find it very hard to inculcate in him the willingness to assume and fulfill responsibility properly--a characteristic so necessary for adjustment in later life. There are songs and rhymes which make these tasks play. For example:

There Was a Little Girl Who Had a Little Curl

It Is Time For My Piggies To Go To Bed

I Wash My Hand Like This

Here's a Little Wash Board

Old Shoes, New Shoes

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38. Gesell, op. cit., p. 13.

39. Arnold Gesell, The Child From Five to Ten, p. 395.





## Summary

Your child is now upon the verge of receiving formal education. He has lost his baby talk and knows some 2562 words.<sup>40</sup> He is most interested in the meaning of single words. The words that he has learned to use, the ideas and relationships that he has gained now become the foundation upon which the education may rest. The more the child's life has been enriched by well chosen rhymes and experiences, the more likely will he find things at school familiar. He will more readily be able to find solutions to his problems aided by the ideas he has learned in the past. Your child's progress in school, his ability to get along with his playmates, to gain from new experiences, etc., is the product and the fruitage of all your efforts with him during the pre-school years.

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40. M. E. Breckenridge, Child Development, p. 372.



## CHAPTER IV

### USING NURSERY RHYMES IN A READING READINESS PROGRAM

#### I. Reading Readiness

A decade or more ago, it was assumed that all children who entered school were ready to learn to read but we now know that they must have a readiness to read. We say they must have a "reading readiness." Reading readiness simply defined, includes nearly every branch of the child's early training. It includes his ability to listen, to pay attention, to keep a series of simple events in mind, and to use words and phrases, and sentences. Authorities agree that the child needs vocabulary of from 2500 to 3000 words when he enters the first grade. A "bread and butter" vocabulary of a few hundred words may be adequate to make his everyday needs known, but it will not enable the child to understand the language of the schoolroom.

Reading readiness also embraces the child's ability to think, to concentrate, to have a wide memory span of ideas, and to be able to tell or reproduce a story he has heard read or told. Finally, he must not only be accurately observant of details but he must be able to note likenesses and differences.

We must be constantly alert to the fact that the little child lives in a world of his own--he still interprets nature in anthropomorphic terms and thinks of animals and natural forces



as talking and acting much as they themselves do.<sup>41</sup> The wise person endeavors to meet the child at the child's own level of understanding and to reason and talk with him in the simple language he can understand.

The first concern of the master teacher is that of capitalizing on the "wanting to knowness," or curiosity, of the learner. This can be taken for granted because most children are interested in all with which they come in contact. Readiness may be inspired, to a degree, by a believing teacher and by a school-room environment made attractive with the things in life that instill a deep appreciation of beauty.

Recognized as a significant element in the concept of reading readiness is the physical well-being of the learner. Investigations of this phase of the problem have carried workers into the study of the educational deficiencies, glandular disturbances, toxic conditions, bacterial infections, and hearing and seeing deficiencies. It is clear, then, that the present concept of readiness has been established on four fundamental bases: mental, emotional, physical, and social development.<sup>42</sup>

#### Factors in Reading Readiness

A desire to learn, or a "wanting to know," on the part of the child can be assumed.<sup>43</sup> Then the first factor--attitudes--is one that the teacher can do something about. Attitudes of approach rather than withdrawal can be developed when individual

41. I. M. Terman, Children's Reading, p. 33.

42. M. E. Breckenridge, Child Development, p. 386.

43. Ibid., p. 521.



differences are capitalized upon, when the child is guided by an informed and inspired teacher, and when he is challenged by materials that are attractive, meaningful, and entertaining.

An important element in building attitudes is well-founded success. We have come to see that just as a proper amount and kind of food are necessary to health and happiness, so is the proper amount of success.<sup>44</sup> Success in developing a readiness for reading is not achieved by being pitied, and it is not achieved simply by mastering the mechanics of the process. An emotional well-being is born of a feeling of worth-while accomplishment. It is for this reason that guidance also involves making the learner aware of small increments of growth. Success stimulates further practice efforts.<sup>45</sup>

It is highly important that the concept of reading for meaning should be evolved from a number of successive and challenging experiences with reading activities. Not the least of these experiences should be the reading of pictures. Dr. Julia L. Hahn in 1935 presented us with a "readiness reader" composed almost entirely of pictures as a first step towards the mastery of the printed page.<sup>46</sup> It is only natural that the child's first contact with reading should be with pictures, for this is a convenient transfer from the real to the vicarious experiencing. The modern nursery rhyme books are filled with entertaining and

44. J. M. Lee, The Child and His Curriculum, p. 70.

45. G. H. Hildreth, Learning the Three R's, p. 43.

46. R. H. Lane, The Teacher in the Modern Elementary School, p. 278.





meaningful pictures. Following this transfer to reading pictures, systematically graduated experiences in which word forms begin to take on meanings can be acquired so that a desirable concept of reading can be evolved. This is another factor the teacher can do something about.

Since reading is a process of purposeful experiencing, it follows that reading involves taking something to the printed page. It is found that some children read haltingly without understanding because the reading material does not call forth images, or pictures, within the experience of the child. For example, a child may not know the meaning of meadow and brook although he may know what pasture and creek mean. The reader has to form hypotheses and to make judgments as he reads.<sup>47</sup> In many instances, the primary teacher is confronted with the problems of children who come from homes where children's books are nonexistent, where they are "sheltered" by overindulgent parents who do much to their thinking, where vacations mean just so many more days of confinement at home, or where a foreign language is spoken. In other instances the child may be mentally immature. The nursery rhymes are at their best here for they help develop a common language background and seem to please and entertain children from all types of homes.

The comprehension of reading materials depends upon the learner's experience background and the use to which this experience is put. It is for this reason that in a program of

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47. Hildreth, op. cit., p. 77.



activities for the development of readiness for reading there is a heavy emphasis on the building of experiences, both real and vicarious. The nursery rhymes form a basis for many vicarious experiences, such as: reciting, telling stories about and acting out of rhymes.<sup>48</sup>

Every child has the right to claim his "literary heritage," especially if he is to acquire the habit of reading for "fun" as well as for information. The rhymes and jingles handed down to us through the ages are filled with fun and frolic that appeal to the child. Children vary widely in their emotional development, and this must be taken into consideration along with mental and physical growth. For example, a few children may be able to enjoy nothing more than picture tales, some may be challenged by the Nursery Rhymes, others by the "Gingerbread Boy" and other fanciful stories at that level while a few may be able to enjoy "Hansel and Gretel." To meet this situation, the teacher has the problem of providing opportunities for rich experiences with children's literature in a manner that recognizes variations in individual development.

Other things being equal, the development of vocabulary and facility of language expression is one of the major instructional jobs of the teacher during the development for reading readiness. In view of this, the activities in connection with nursery rhymes should emphasize development in this respect. In the beginning, at least, the child's reading vocabulary cannot

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48. A. E. Moore, Literature Old and New For Children, p. 33.



exceed his speaking, and possibly his listening, vocabulary; therefore, every opportunity must be extended to increase his knowledge of words. The enjoyable and entertaining rhymes contain many of the words that the child will need to build an expandable vocabulary. Lee<sup>49</sup> states that the vocabulary increases with age but other factors seem to show that it is increase in background experience and training which are more important than maturation or intelligence.

A refinement of concept is the first order of learning. Teachers have long been aware of certain pupils who anticipate gross meanings readily but who arrive at inaccurate concepts. These are the pupils who say puppy for dog, kitten for cat, and the like. When the difference between dog and puppy is called to their attention, the reply is sometimes, "Oh, I never thought of that!" Although such errors may be due in part to meager experiences, there is considerable evidence to show that in beginning reading activities, as well as in later years, inaccurate comprehension is frequently caused by erroneous concepts. The repetition of words in rhymes help to form a clear concept.

Of first concern to the teacher is: Has the pupil acquired an adequate background of experiences to bring to the printed page? A second concern is: Has the pupil sufficient maturity to associate ideas gained from these experiences and to perceive relationships? Without the ability to perceive relationships, reading activities may deteriorate into purposeless word-calling,

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49. J. M. Lee, The Child and His Curriculum, p. 47.





resulting in a dislike for reading. The trouble with much reading in school is that the pupils are not seeking anything when they read; consequently, they find precisely what they are looking for--nothing.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout the development activities emphasis has to be placed on attitudes and meanings rather than on the mechanics of reading. One of the important aspects of any developmental program in language is the ability to organize and classify ideas and concepts. Through selected activities the pupil is taken from the classification of objects to the classification of items at a symbolic level. The first grade teacher should be reasonably sure that a child is old enough mentally to grasp a relatively simple type of symbols before she gives him intensive training.<sup>51</sup>

Upon entrance to school there are always a number of children who evidence inaccurate auditory perceptions by mispronunciations and by slurring across phrases as though they were single words. Beginning with the level of the learner, the development of this ability, then, becomes an important instructional job for the teacher. Auditory ability is developed in games with words of like beginnings or endings; making up rhymes; and choral speaking. The nursery rhymes are especially adept at building auditory perceptions.

Speech habits as a factor in readiness for reading are of

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50. L. W. Cole, Psychology of the Elementary School Subjects,  
p. 52.

51. Ibid., p. 41.





importance in that they modify the accuracy of the kinaesthetic imagery (that is, through the organs of hearing and of speech production). In addition, faulty habits such as baby talk may provide a clue to the level of emotional maturity. Although many of the common speech difficulties are functional and therefore are the responsibility of the teacher, some speech handicaps such as nasality, cleft palate, hoarseness, and tongue-tie, require the attention of a health specialist. Stammering and stuttering may need analysis and correction by a specialist in speech.<sup>52</sup> A child cannot be taught to read or be entirely prepared to engage successfully in reading activities by correcting his speech difficulties, but it is important that this phase of his language development should receive attention.

The ability to make visual discriminations between word forms, by attending to general form or configuration, and by focusing attention on details had been conceded generally as one important factor in reading readiness for initial reading activities. It should be pointed out, however, that a pupil may be able to make these discriminations between word forms but, for other developmental reasons, still be unable to achieve success in reading. In other words, this ability may be one of the lowest levels for reading because other important aspects of reading involving higher thought processes are not necessarily brought into play. Visual abilities are developed through exercises and games which capitalize on the play

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52. Paul L. Boynton, Psychology of Child Development, p. 265.



element; matching pictures, objects and colors; working out a jigsaw puzzle; seeing likenesses and differences in objects, pictures and words; following the lines of a chart. The rhymes serve as a common meeting ground for all of these activities.

Among the mechanical factors in reading, the habit of viewing both sentences and words from left to right is probably the most important. As early as 1879 Professor Javal of the University of Paris called attention to the fact that the passage of the eye across the page from left to right is not continuous but consists of a series of movements and pauses.<sup>53</sup> Since inaccurate habits of perceptual attack lead to considerable confusion in reading for some children, it is important that the development of this type of behavior should be forestalled. This can be done, largely by adequate first teaching.

Since reading is a thinking process, it is a foregone conclusion that a certain level of mental maturity is essential to success with activities involving reading. Memory span is an index to mental capacity. Memory span as a factor in readiness for reading is probably beyond the responsibility of the teacher. It is the teacher's concern, however, to see that by means of conception activities the most is made of the child's inherent capacity. But first, it is the teacher's obligation to take steps to gain understanding of the pupil's difficulties in this respect by means of standardized tests of reading readiness or of intelligence. If the child is not mature enough to profit

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53. C. R. Stone, Better Primary Reading, p. 141.



from reading activities he should be guided into other types of worth-while activities. On the other hand, some children who have been classified as "dullards" have physical or emotional handicaps which, when corrected, permit normal progress.

Among the many adjustment problems of pupils with which the teacher of primary children must concern herself are those of independent work habits, cooperation, purposeful activity, and concentration. In view of this, a systematic program for the developing of readiness for independent activity involving reading must provide for sequential experiences in terms of learner needs. In the main, the ability to give sustained attention to an activity and the ability to plan an effective independent attack on a given problem will be natural outcomes of other learnings. When the material fails to challenge the learner because they require meaningless tracing or cutting and pasting, or because they are drab and uninteresting, this objective is not likely to be attained. Not infrequently pupils acquire unfortunate work habits, depend too much on the teacher, bother other children in the group, and present similar problems if they have not been prepared adequately for the immediate activity. In brief, if the pupil is to become an effective reader, his tasks should be well suited to him, the atmosphere should be conducive to work, and habits of attending should be developed.<sup>54</sup>

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" in the

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54. Guy L. Bond, Teaching the Child to Read, p. 74.





teaching of reading, therefore the teacher must be well informed as to the possible deficiencies and the best methods of preventing future difficulties.

#### Methods and Techniques Used In Teaching Rhymes

Beginning reading is no longer the "scourge of infancy" as Rosseau called it in 1762 because the various teaching processes are so thoroughly adapted to the children's instinctive interests and activities that delight in learning and systematic progress go hand in hand.

The work of the first grade is to introduce the child to his school and acquaint him with his community. This is done through units developed by play. The home is discussed and the work of everyone in the home is expounded upon. People that help the child such as, the milkman, postman, grocer, etc., are discussed. Little farms, post offices, grocery stores may be built to help the teacher acquaint the child with his local environment. The sentences used by the children in their discussions are used incidentally for reading charts and booklets. Thus the child is given playful but thoughtful initiation into the study of social activities and the interdependence of various social groups.

In addition to these meaningful social studies extensively used are children's games centered around nursery rhymes. These rhythmic but often nonsensical games and songs constitute one of the most characteristic and pleasurable features of child life. In the first grade such nursery rhymes are used to train in





physical activity, rhymic control, singing, oral expression, cooperation and many other skills which are necessary for readiness for reading. A learned professor, stated that he received his readiness for reading at his mother's knee listening to nursery rhymes.<sup>55</sup>

### Introduction to Rhymes

When school opens several nursery rhyme books may be placed conveniently around the room. Pictures of the various nursery rhyme characters may be used as room borders and decoration. The teacher may read some of the rhymes to the children and have them recite those with which they are familiar. The children will take great delight in the rhymes and they will create a feeling of being at home in their environment. The teacher may then ask if the children would like to make a Nursery Rhyme Village in the schoolroom. This suggestion will assure the children that delightful times are ahead.

Discussion and planning follow the suggestion. The children may decide where to build the village. They may choose one corner of the room and decide to build it upon a long table. The teacher will guide their discussion. The village may consist of the Old Woman in a Shoe's Home, Jack Be Nimble, Marjorie Daw, and other characters that so delight the hearts of children. Since the children are aware that the rhymes are make believe, they will show great enthusiasm in the construction of the

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55. C. L. Murray, Education Teacher, Lecture in Current Education Literature, Summer term 1948, Florida Southern College.



village and will use latent imagination and ingenuity in their work. No false concept will be established in using substitutes for reality. The houses made of shoeboxes, the streets made of blocks, the toy cows and sheep will serve to instigate them on to further study and inquiry. The unit will serve to orient the child to the school situation, while the make believe which pervades the unit provides rich opportunity for creative development.<sup>56</sup>

The children may decide to bring dolls and dress them to represent the different nursery rhyme characters. The costumes may be copied from pictures in the books. Pinking shears may be used to finish the edges, thus making hems unnecessary. Boy Blue's horn, Humpty Dumpty's wall and other objects may be made from modeling clay. Crepe paper and small wire may be used to dress the dolls. Pipe cleaners and clothes pins may be dressed as some of the nursery rhyme characters. When the unit is in progress there will be many other ideas which will present themselves.

The teacher may make arrangements to make a chart of all of the rhymes taught, a picture dictionary of the words, a booklet of the directions, and print the rhymes upon the primer typewriter so that the children may have a "Nursery Rhyme Book" of their very own. This book will help the teacher to determine whether the child is ready to use the regular textbooks. If he

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56. K. Diddinger, "A Mother Goose Activity," The Grade Teacher, (February, 1942), p. 22.



cannot hold it without dropping it, if he does not know which is the top or the bottom he is not ready for a state textbook. This book may be used in teaching the child how to handle and take care of books.

Rhymes printed upon charts, directions and simple seat-work exercises based on the nursery rhymes serve to build a sight vocabulary of color words, action words, and many of the words in the beginning basal books.<sup>57</sup>

### Teaching "Jack Be Nimble"

The first rhyme to be presented may be:

Jack, be nimble,  
Jack, be quick,  
Jack, jump over  
The candlestick.

A candlestick may be provided for the occasion. The children may take turns jumping over the candlestick like the boy in the picture book. C. R. Stone<sup>58</sup> believes that the use of nursery rhymes is a good plan for reading readiness because of their shortness and because the children do not tire of the natural repetition in connection with the rhyme.

A picture may be drawn by the class which will show the boy jumping over the candlestick. The teacher may show how Jack always jumps from left to right. Through incidentals like this you may begin the formation of good reading habits.

57. Ibid., p. 22.

58. C. R. Stone, Silent and Oral Reading, p. 44.



The teacher may then get the children to suggest that the rhyme be written on the board by asking, "Wouldn't it be fun to have this rhyme written on the board so that we may all see it and read it instead of just having one copy in the book?" "Who will tell me what to say?" McKee<sup>59</sup> suggests that when writing on the board attention should be called to the fact that the writing is made from left to right. The children might also under the proper guidance suggest that hectograph copies be made so that they may have a copy of the rhyme for their own. The teacher will agree to this but she will point out that they must wait until they have read a few more so that they will have enough to make a book. With this happy thought the teacher will lead the children into some other phase of work. The competent teacher is always careful to change when she feels that the interest is waning. She is also careful to leave the study with some interesting project in the future.

The next class the teacher may point to the rhyme which she has now written upon the board and ask how many in the class remember what the rhyme is about. If no one seems to know she may start reading it slowly. Some child will say, "Oh, I know! Let me read it for you." This "read" means "to repeat from memory while looking at the words." This is now widely accepted as the first step toward reading.<sup>60</sup> The teacher may follow the

59. P. McKee, Reading and Literature in the Elementary School, p. 155.

60. E. W. Dolch, Teaching Primary Reading, p. 75.





reading with the pointer, moving slowly, being very careful to point at the whole line and not at the single word. Word reading will come later.

After the class has read the rhyme in unison and several have "read" it alone, the teacher may ask, "Who will show me the line that says 'Jack, be nimble?'" Hold the pointer under the line while the child reads. "Who knows which line says 'Jack, jump over?'" This may be done for the whole rhyme. The teacher will see that all have an opportunity to try and that all have a feeling of accomplishment and pleasure.

Another time the teacher may present the class with cardboard strips with a line of the rhyme printed upon it. She will show the class the strips and carefully point out the differences in them. "Which line is the longest?" "Isn't candlestick a long word?" When she has explained the likenesses and differences, she may show the children a game that they may play with the strips. She may play "The Old Blind Lady." This is played by the teacher closing her eyes and holding a strip in front of her. The children are to read the strip silently so that they will be able to help the old lady. After the children have read the strip the teacher points to a child and he takes the teacher's hand and helps her place the strip under the proper line on the board. These strips may be placed in the wall chart to make the same rhyme as is on the board.

After the class has learned the location of the lines they are ready to learn the phrases. The rhyme may be broken into phrases like this:



Jack

be nimble

be quick

jump over

the candlestick

These phrases may be passed to the children and they may take turns doing as the phrase tells them.

When the phrases have been taught the teacher breaks the rhyme down into words. She may do this by drawing lines under or around the separate words and playing games with them. As the teacher draws a line the children may tell her the word. She may erase one word at a time and let the children recite them as she erases them. Children enjoy action either on the part of the teacher or themselves so any idea that the teacher may conceive will be accepted and enjoyed.

In order to test the children to see if they are learning any of the words the teacher may try placing the word in another location. A picture of a boy may be placed in some other part of the room and a few sentences placed under it.

This is Jack.

Jack reads a book.

Ask the children if they see the word Jack anywhere else in the room. Some child will find the picture and with a little ingenuity upon the part of the teacher the class will be able to read this without any trouble.

If the teacher feels that the children are losing interest in a project she should change to something in which they will



show interest. Any technique, although it may appear valuable for a particular reason is to be condemned if it tends to result in a lag of interest on the part of the group.<sup>61</sup>

The teacher may sketch a hectograph picture of Jack. For seat work the children may color the drawings according to directions, such as:

This is Jack.

Jack can jump.

Color Jack.

These drawings may be placed in a file for safe keeping until there are enough to make a booklet.

The same words may be used repeatedly until they become a part of the child's vocabulary.

Frequent use of signs, notices, and directions may be made. These may be printed upon tagboard and kept as a record of what each child did for the unit.

We are going to make

a Nursery Rhyme Village.

Mary will make the candlestick.

John will make Jack.

These directions will help the children learn their classmates' names. Another painless way for the children to recognize their names is to take the children's pictures and mount them on a card with their names printed below.

The children may draw a picture of Jack. The best one will

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61. C. R. Stone, Better Primary Reading, p. 282.



be placed upon the permanent chart which the teacher will make of each rhyme studied. These charts will be used for frequent review lessons.

Dr. William S. Gray<sup>62</sup> points out that "Jack be Nimble" may be used in training auditory perception. One day, before reading the rhyme, ask if the children can think of a word that rhymes with thick. After the children have indicated the words that rhyme, repeat the procedure with other jingles.

#### Teaching "Jack and Jill"

When the teacher notes that the pupils are tiring of the rhyme she may say, "I know of another rhyme that has 'Jack' in it. Can you think of one? Mine begins with 'Jack and.'" A child will immediately say, "Jack and Jill went up the hill, etc." The teacher may ask, "Who will show us how Jack fell down?" "Who will show us how Jill came tumbling after?" The children may recite the rhyme while someone acts it out. She may have a study of the picture. Questions may be asked as: How many children are there? Do you suppose the pail is heavy? Do you think Jack cried? This free discussion period will help the child to learn to express himself and train him to enter into classroom discussions. The counting of the children in the picture brings in a concrete example of the number two.

The teacher may suggest that the rhyme be written upon the board and later fixed upon a permanent chart the same as "Jack

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62. W. S. Gray, On Their Own In Reading, p. 140.





be Nimble." She may ask similar questions as she did in the presentation of the other rhyme. She may ask, "What shall I write first?" The children will tell her as she writes it upon the board in short phrases. McKee suggests that the teacher may sound the syllables she writes so that the pupils can learn that both the writing and the pronouncing of words go from left to right.<sup>63</sup>

As the teacher writes the line the children may eagerly anticipate each succeeding line and volunteer joyful remarks about them.

After the rhyme has been written upon the board the children may take turns "reading" the rhyme while the teacher uses the pointer, running it along under each line as it is read. The children may be asked to hold up their hands when they wish to read. This will acquaint the child with the idea of holding up his hand when he wishes to speak. Teaching him unconsciously one of the courtesies of the classroom.

The teacher may ask, "Who sees the line that says 'Went up the hill?'" Some child will raise his hand immediately and the teacher will know that he is not ready. The teacher may say, "You must always look carefully for the line before you raise your hand. Look again." Another class courtesy will be instilled in the child. The teacher may then show the children the strips that she has made of the rhyme. She may ask the children to see

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63. Paul McKee, Reading Literature in the Elementary School, p. 155.



if she has enough strips. The children may count the lines of the rhyme and then the strips of cardboard. Is there enough? She may leave out one of the strips if she so desires. This will test the children's observation and may serve as an incidental number lesson.

The teacher may place the strips upon the wall chart. She may ask the children to watch and see that she does not make a mistake. The teacher may purposely place the strips in the wrong order to test the children's observation. The children will soon discover the mistake and suggest the right change. The teacher will explain that everyone can make a mistake and that all should be willing to admit their mistakes and to learn from them.

When the teacher has decided that the children are properly familiar with the rhyme she may play games similar to those she did with "Jack be Nimble." She will go a step farther by making word cards for "Jack and Jill." The words are printed upon tagboard in large primary letters. Black and white are said to carry a better impression upon the child's eye so it is suggested that white tagboard and black India ink be used for these cards.<sup>64</sup> The words may be shown to the children making sure that they understand that the words are located all over the rhyme and not in just the first line. She then gives each child a word card with the directions that they all look carefully and when they have found a word on the chart that looks exactly like

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64. A. S. Barr, Early Childhood Education, p. 397.



theirs to raise their hands. When all of the children have raised their hands have them put them down. The teacher then asks that all of the children be very quiet while each child tiptoes up to the chart and places his word under the word on the chart and tells the class the name of the word. If a child does not find his word the class may read the rhyme while the teacher follows their reading with the pointer. When the pointer comes to the word the child will recognize it. In case he does not find his word the teacher should somehow point it out to him without him realizing that he has missed it entirely. There are many little motions that the teacher may give that will show the child which is his word. Dolch<sup>65</sup> suggests the teacher may even whisper the word to the child. When this is done, however, a thorough study of the word should be made so that the child will not miss the word again. Point out to the child that he must always watch carefully for he may find the word again.

These word cards, or flash cards as they are sometimes called, may be used in many ways. One is the "moving picture show." The teacher holds the card in front of her and the child tells the name of the word. They must do this in a flash because this is a motion picture machine and will not wait. Interest in the game will be renewed by changing the story. The teacher may pretend to be selling fish and those that can name the fish (cards) may take them to their desk and pretend that they caught them from a lake. There are many other

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65. E. W. Dolch, Teaching Primary Reading, p. 75.



interesting versions of this game.

At another period the teacher may tell the children that they are going to do a lot of different things this time and that all may not have a chance to enter the same game but that they can all help by watching very closely. When each child is not going to have a turn always let him know in advance so that he will not suffer disappointment. First, let the children read the rhyme to refresh their memory. Then play briefly the game of "finding the line which says." Now, give the children the word cards and tell them to find the words on the chart. Paul McKee<sup>66</sup> notes the importance of teaching the child to begin at the left of the word and examine it carefully all the way through to the end, in order to find a matching word. The child who has "Jack" may be asked to see how many times he can find Jack on the chart. When it has been discovered that there are four the class may count them in unison; thus they learn the quantitative value of four.

The use of word cards may be used as a lesson in health. The children may be cautioned about keeping the cards away from their mouth and face. Some child may show the class the correct way to hold the card.

The teacher may now play the "eraser game." This is done by placing the eraser under the word of the rhyme on the board and having the children say the words quickly. This will develop speed in reading. The children may then divide into groups, a

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66. McKee, op. cit., p. 135.







leader being chosen for each group. One group may play the "eraser game." Another may use the word cards to play the game of baseball. Baseball is played by placing four children, with word cards, on the four bases. The pitcher stands in the middle with his cards. The pitcher and basemen flash their cards. If the child says all the words which are shown to him he makes a home run. Another group may play "Fishing," etc. These games are, of course, played under the careful supervision of the teacher. The teacher must group them so that all may have a chance to gain a feeling of accomplishment from the encounter.

The children may also make a finger print picture of Jack and Jill. They may learn the song about them. The song may be found in the Progressive Music Series, Books I and II. They may dramatize the rhyme as they sing.

The children may be given seatwork which use the rhyme as a basis:

This is Jack.      This is Jill.      This is the hill.

Color Jack.      Color Jill.      Color the hill yellow.

Directions may be used to increase the reading vocabulary:

Jerry will make the hill.

Mary will dress Jill.

George will dress Jack.

This rhyme gives the teacher a wonderful opportunity to call attention to the meanings of "up" and "down." The teacher may carefully point out the differences in the two words and suggest that they play a game with the words. Place the words on tagboard and flash them before the children, having them



stand when they see the word "up" and sit when they see the word "down." After the children have learned them, other words may be put with the two. This will call for closer observation. This game may be used to introduce other rhymes. The teacher may ask if the children can think of something in the school ground that goes up and down. The children may be guided into saying "See-saw Marjorie Daw," if they do not suggest it.

#### Teaching "See-Saw Marjorie Daw"

When the rhyme is suggested the teacher may produce a spool and a doctor's throat paddle with which she may make a see-saw. The children may be shown how to sit upon the floor, grasp hands and see-saw back and forth to the rhyme. The teacher may then with the aid of the children write the rhyme upon the board.

The procedure for the teaching of this rhyme may be much the same as for the others. The children will be delighted to notice that their old friend Jack is in the rhyme. The teacher may point out that Jack must not have worked very hard and that he must have been a wee bit lazy. The children may be shown that they should work hard and not waste their time so that they can get their work. Point out that their school work is their job and that they must always do their very best.

This rhyme presents a wonderful opportunity to teach color words. Place the color words upon the back of the paddles and color the appropriate colors. Then have the children place Marjorie and Jack upon the different see-saws when the color word is written upon the board. When other rhymes are taught



the teacher may use objects in them to teach the names of colors.

See-Saw Marjorie Daw may be used as a basis for a health and safety lesson. The teacher may ask where the see-saws are usually placed. The children will offer that they are placed in the fresh air and sunshine. From the free discussion an experience chart may be made.

Jack and Marjorie Daw are playing  
out-of-doors in the fresh air  
and sunshine.

They play in their own yard.

They do not jump off.

They are having fun.

Seatwork for Marjorie may also be given:

This is Marjorie Daw.      This is Jack.

Color Marjorie.      Color Jack.

Color the see-saw red.

Directions may be placed upon the direction chart.

Lynn will color the see-saw.

Harold will dress Jack.

Shirley will dress Marjorie.

This rhyme may be used for the teaching of the "s" sound.

#### Teaching "Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary"

This rhyme may be introduced to the children upon the school ground as a game. One child may be chosen as Mary and will stand at one end of the play square. The other children



will come up to her and sing, "Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?"

Mary will answer, "With silver bells and cockleshells and pretty maids all in a row."

When she finishes the rhyme she will chase the children and those caught will be placed in Mary's flower garden. The last child caught will be Mary in the next game.

The children will probably suggest that "Mary, Mary Quite Contrary" be placed upon a chart. For the next lesson, after singing the rhyme a few times to refresh it in the children's minds, the teacher with the help of the children will write the rhyme on the board. In the lesson based upon this material the class may follow the same plan as before; namely, reading it as a whole, finding individual lines, then phrases and words. To impress the child that the words really come from the rhyme, the teacher may cut the strips into words right before the children's eyes. This process may help the children considerably, for, while some have succeeded in every activity from reading the whole to matching and naming individual words, others may not understand the meaning of the term "last word," and another may not understand what is meant by "first word." If the teacher cuts the words and explains each one as she cuts, it will help the child distinguish the difference in words.

By the time this rhyme is presented the children will be familiar to the way of working in groups and the teacher can have more individual instruction. The children have grown in experiences and sight vocabulary. The teacher may choose a





captain for the separate groups and give them word cards for each of the rhymes they have studied. The group drills will develop leadership and create a feeling of group cooperation. The child too timid or self-conscious to take an active part in a large class or group often develops confidence and shows real ability when working in a small group. Unsuspected talents which the class needs are often found in these shy children.<sup>67</sup>

The children may be given seatwork about the rhyme:

Color Mary brown.

Color the flowers red.

Directions may be put on the direction chart:

Arthur will make the bucket.

Phyllis will dress Mary.

Joan, George, and Charles will make the flowers.

Jean will bring the grass.

The children may make a picture of Mary to place on the permanent chart. Whenever the teacher deems it desirable the children are given a thorough review of the wall charts, the direction charts, word cards and tagboard strips. The children will often conduct this review themselves during their free period if the teacher will have the material available for them.

The teacher must always be alert in finding exciting and interesting ways to hold the child's interest. The attitude of

67. M. E. Pennell, The Teaching of Reading for Better Living, p. 101.



the teacher can either build or destroy the interest of the child. A teacher not in sympathy with childhood will create an atmosphere that only the hardy can withstand. Children are quick to detect an indifferent attitude. An indifferent teacher has no place in the classroom.<sup>68</sup>

### Teaching "Polly Put the Kettle On"

To introduce the next rhyme the teacher may play the record "Polly Put the Kettle On." After playing the record several times the children may sing with the record. When they have become thoroughly familiar with the words by singing, the rhyme may be placed on the board. The teacher may do this with the children suggesting the next line. They may possibly be surprised that there are two little girls in the rhyme. This surprise will quicken the children's observation. The teacher may suggest that she has something else to do with the rhyme but that it is a surprise and that they will have to wait until the next day to find out what it is.

This last method may be a way of getting children to come to school. There are some children that cannot divide their loyalty between the home and the school. If the teacher can make school so interesting and exciting that the child does not have time to think about the fact that he is leaving his mother and the nest, she has made the first step towards helping the child adjust his loyalty.

The children may look eagerly for the surprise when they

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68. Ibid., p. 22.



enter the room the next morning but all they will see is the rhyme upon the board and the chart. They may demand to know the surprise but the teacher may tell them that they must learn the words before they can find out her secret. This will serve as a drive for the children to pay close attention so that the forthcoming secret will not be too far delayed.

The rhyme on the board is filled with rhymetic repetition which children love.

Polly, put the kettle on, Sukey, take it off again,  
 Polly, put the kettle on, Sukey, take it off again,  
 Polly, put the kettle on, Sukey, take it off again,  
 And we'll all have tea. It'll all boil away.

The rhyme may be read in unison and the repetitions pointed out. Let the children take turns by group reading and reading it alone. Choose one child to be Polly and one child to be Sukey and let them go through the actions while the children read. When the teacher is certain that the children know the position of most of the words in the rhyme she may then announce the surprise.

She may say, "The girls of the class are going to learn a dance to 'Polly, Put the Kettle On.'" Eager hands may go up and the teacher must carefully explain that all the girls may have a chance to be Polly or Sukey. The boys are going to help by singing as nicely as they are able.

Dance:

Choose twelve girls, six Pollys and six Sukeys. The children come out on the stage in couples swinging their kettles



between them. They turn and face the audience the Pollys in front of the Sukeys. The children sing "Polly, Put the Kettle On" three times and each time Polly puts the kettle down to the floor leaving it the last time. The Sukeys step between the Pollys on the words "And we'll all have tea." The children sing "Sukey, take it off again" three times and each time Sukey bends and touches the kettle picking it up on the third time. They then dance in couples around the stage to the music stopping in the middle of the stage to repeat the same actions then they go off the stage.

The next day the teacher may present the class with the strips for matching the rhyme. Let the children all have an opportunity to match a strip. Let the eight children hold the strips of the rhyme before the class. Give each child a pair of scissors and let him cut the strips apart and hold the separate words up for the class to say. The teacher will give careful supervision of this so that the child will not make a mistake. The children may count how many times the various words appear in the rhyme.

Let the children sing the song again and the girls may act out their parts. Hectograph seatwork may be given with directions:

This is Polly.

This is Sukey.

Color Polly's dress blue.

Color Sukey's dress purple.

Color the kettle red.

Color the kettle red.

Color the rest as you like.

During this time signs and notices may be written on the





board or posted upon the bulletin board.

We are learning to do a dance.

It is to the tune of Polly put the Kettle On.

The boys do not dance.

The boys sing.

Alice is going to bring a Polly doll.

Mary is going to bring a Sukey doll.

Betty Jo is going to bring the stove.

We like to play, "Polly put the Kettle On."

In addition to this dance the games "The Farmer's in the Dell," "London Bridge," "Mulberry Bush," and "Hi Ho" should be played. It is optional whether they be taught as a reading lesson or not but they should be played. They will familiarize boys and girls with the traditional games which as a heritage from the past, should be a part of every child's experience.<sup>69</sup>

Besides these rhymes used for reading lessons there are others which should be read for building up a listening vocabulary as well as for pleasure. These tales may include "The House that Jack Built," "Old Mother Hubbard," and "The Old Woman Whose Pig Would Not Get Over the Stile So That She Could Not Get Home That Night." Anne Eaton states that to learn to listen to the music of great verse is the beginning of a love for poetry.<sup>70</sup>

Various methods may be used, when reading to the children, to train the children to listen. The teacher may read the rhyme properly then read in a "word by word" manner. She may ask the

69. Anne T. Eaton, Reading With Children, p. 45.

70. Ibid., p. 43.



children which they like the better. After the children have made their decision, the teacher may say, "Before long you will be reading in a book of your own. When you read, try to think how the words would sound if someone said them to you. Think of how the words would sound if you said them instead of read them." Before reading to the children the teacher may tell the children to listen for certain things, also, that she will ask someone to tell the story when she has finished reading. The "Old Woman And the Pig" is a fine example of a story which will train the child to relate a short series of events. While reading the story the teacher may leave out a word and ask the children to tell the word. For example, she may leave out "dog" in "Old Mother Hubbard." Before the sentence is read the teacher may say, "I am going to leave out a word when I read this line. I believe it starts like 'down.' Listen and see if you can tell me the word I left out." This practice will help teach the child what is meant by using the content to find out the pronunciation of a word.

#### Teaching "Little Jack Horner"

This rhyme is usually well known to the children upon their entrance to school. If, however, there are some that seem not to recognize the rhyme the class may recite the poem until it is familiar to all. The teacher may then say, "Did you know that chalk talks? Would you like to see how the chalk talks? All right, then lock your lips and listen to the chalk." The teacher may write the first line upon the board. "Little Jack Horner



sat in a corner." "Now, children, what did the chalk say?" The children will soon be playing the game eagerly and will read the rhyme silently as she writes. This may be their introduction to silent reading. McKee<sup>71</sup> states that silent reading is the most neglected and the most important duty of the elementary school. "The Chalk Talks" may be used with the other rhymes and soon the children will be able to read them silently and dramatize them.

Jack Horner may be used as a character study. What are we to think of a boy who goes off into a corner and appropriates all the good things? He picks out the plums, plums, put there by someone else and then shouts, "What a good boy am I!" This seems like selfishness, does it not?<sup>72</sup> The children may discuss the rhyme and with the proper guidance come to the conclusion that bragging is not a favorable characteristic to possess.

An interesting activity is to hectograph a copy of the rhyme for each child and have him cut it into meaningful units, as: Little Jack Horner, sat in a corner, eating, his Christmas pie, He put in, his thumb, And brought out, a plum, and said, "What, a big boy, am I." The child may use these strips to build the rhyme, referring to the rhyme on the chart when necessary. After he has built the rhyme, he may read it aloud, perhaps to another child who has been assigned to him as his

71. Paul McKee, Reading and Literature in the Elementary School, p. 70.

72. Henry Jones Mulford, "Mother Goose in Education," Hygeia, Volume 25, 1947, p. 922.



"teacher;" or he may be asked to read some of the separate strips.

This building exercise may be made more difficult by putting two rhymes into one envelope.

Similar procedures of the other rhymes may be used in teaching this rhyme. Directions may be given upon the board, seatwork based upon the rhyme, someone appointed to dress Jack and pictures drawn to be placed upon the permanent chart.

#### Teaching "Humpty Dumpty"

The teacher may bring an empty egg shell and some pipe cleaners to school the day she wishes to present this rhyme. She may show them to the children and ask them if they know what rhyme the egg may represent. While she is talking she may be slowly fixing the arms and legs so that she may place them on the egg. She may use black paper to make the eyes and mouth of Humpty Dumpty. Before she finishes the Humpty Dumpty someone will have recognized the figure and the rhyme recalled. The rhyme may be repeated while the teacher completes the character.

The children may dramatize Humpty Dumpty. They may repeat the rhyme for the teacher to write upon the board. She may leave off the last word in the first two lines:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a ----

Humpty Dumpty had a great ----

All the King's horses and all the King's men

Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again.







The teacher may ask what words are left out. The children will suggest what they are and the teacher may ask if there are any other words that sound the same. They will probably suggest some and the teacher may now start her sound charts. These charts may be made interesting by telling the children that there is a family of people named "All" and that they have a number of children. Everyone in the family has a different first name but they all have the same last name just like the children in the class. The teacher may draw a father and name him Mr. All, a mother Mrs. All, and the children, call, fall, ball, tall, etc. The other rhymes may be used in the same way to build families.

Games mentioned before may be used to impress the children with the words in the rhyme. The children may have seatwork, directions, placed upon the chart, draw pictures and match words about the rhyme. A child may be chosen to make the wall from which Humpty Dumpty fell.

#### Teaching "Little Bopeep"

The teacher may bring to school some toy animals and ask the children to name the animals. She may label the animals and place them around the room. After discussing them she may ask the children to guess the name of the little girl that has sheep just like the one to which she is pointing. The children will guess Bopeep and the teacher may ask if they would like to sing a song about her. After the children have sung the rhyme the teacher may place it upon the board. The children may



dramatize the rhyme. MacClintock<sup>73</sup> states that the games and dramatizations of Bopeep and Boy Blue, and what not, are on the road to true dramatic art.

This rhyme may be used to teach the sound of "p." The children may be shown how to press their lips together tightly and then draw them suddenly apart so that the air escapes with a slight explosion and the sound of "p" is produced.

The same teaching procedures may be used for the learning of this rhyme. The teacher may suggest that they make a farm and put Bopeep's sheep on it. Then she may say, "I know of a boy that lived on a farm, too. He fell asleep and something happened to his animals. I wonder if you can tell me his name?" The children will immediately mention "Boy Blue" and the teacher may tell them that they will talk of him at another time.

#### Teaching "Little Boy Blue"

The teacher may ask the children to lock their lips and watch the chalk talk. The class may read it silently and discuss it. The teacher may ask, "What is the boy's name? Does he live on a farm? Do you suppose he has a last name? What could it be? Where are the sheep? Where are the cows?" After the children have the rhyme well in mind the teacher may say, "We are going to act this rhyme out a little differently. We will choose a farmer, a Boy Blue, and some cows and sheep. The class will recite the poem while the characters dramatize the

73. P. L. MacClintock, Literature in the Elementary School, p. 218.



poem." This introduces the child to choral speaking which helps the child to recognize and interpret rhythm.

Boy Blue may be used as a study of character. This poem will point out his failure in duty. The teacher, in the simple words of the child's vocabulary, may explain that no deed is all mere activity; but back of it lie motives and passions and beyond lie moral and social results.<sup>74</sup>

The teacher may label each figure in the Boy Blue chart picture "Little Boy Blue," "horn," "sheep," "cow," "corn," etc. This is an extra help in fixing the written word in mind.

A story may be composed by the children:

Farmer Brown saw the sheep

in the meadow.

He saw the cows

in the corn.

He called Boy Blue.

Boy Blue woke up.

He blew his horn.

The cows came out

of the corn.

The sheep came out

of the meadow.

If the child fails to recognize "sheep" or "horn" or any of the rhyme words, he is referred to the rhyme previously learned as a means of recalling the word.<sup>75</sup>

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74. Ibid., p. 67.

75. Nila B. Smith, American Reading Instruction, p. 148.



Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" may be presented and discussed with the class when this rhyme is studied.

Similar methods may be used in teaching this rhyme as used with the others. The teacher may present the phrases and then the words to the class. Directions and seatwork may be given concerning the rhyme. A child may be asked to make the hay stack, another the horn. The animals used for Bopeep may also be used for Boy Blue.

The teacher may ask what other rhyme is about sheep. She may suggest the first line is "Baa-Baa, Black Sheep."

#### Teaching "Baa-Baa Black Sheep"

This rhyme may be presented with a song. After the children have sung the song and dramatized it the teacher may place it upon the board for further study. Phrases and word cards may be presented the class for games which have been mentioned before.

Baa-Baa Black Sheep may be used to learn the sound of "b." The teacher says the rhyme over to the children several times making it a point to say every word as clearly and distinctly as possible and yet not lose the rhythm of the rhyme. The children are then asked to use their "quiet lips" while the teacher again says the rhyme aloud. They then all use their "quiet lips." This provides motivated practice for the exercise of the tongue, lips, and jaws, the development of which is most necessary for clear articulation.

Some simple puzzles may be placed on the library table.





Attention of the children should be called to the shape of the spaces to be filled and to the shape of the pieces. Good puzzles can be obtained from the following companies:

Educational Playthings, Inc., 20 East 69th St., New York

The Judy Company, 117 N. Third Avenue, Minneapolis, Minn.

When studying this rhyme the class may learn the numerical value of three. The rhyme may lead to a simple study of wool or farm life.

Directions, seatwork, and similar exercises will be used in the study of the rhyme. The black sheep may be placed in the village near Bopeep and Boy Blue.

#### Teaching the "Old Woman in a Shoe"

No study of nursery rhymes is complete without the learning of the Old Woman in the Shoe. This rhyme gives the bashful child an opportunity to participate. He will feel no reticence when chosen to perform with a group of children. The rhyme gives the teacher an opportunity to place all of the children in a program for the Old Woman may have as many children as the teacher decides to give her.

The rhyme may be taught by similar methods as the others. Interesting interpretations may be presented in which pictures are substituted for certain words. Children greatly enjoy reading such a rebus and will work hard to get its full meaning.

There was an old

Who lived in a



She had so many

She didn't know what to do.

She gave them some broth

Without any

And whipped them all soundly

And put them to

Directions and seatwork may be given which will show the children's progress in vocabulary building. Number concept may be built up from the counting of the Old Woman's children.

A large box may be cut and fixed as a shoe. Crepe paper may be used for the curtains. An orange tree with a line hung with clothes in the yard will make a realistic background.

#### Test That May Accompany The Study of Rhymes

##### Matching test:

Draw a line to the right ending.

Jack and Jill	sat on the wall.
Little Boy Blue	sat in the corner.
Humpty Dumpty	went up the hill.
Little Jack Horner	come blow your horn.

Draw a picture in each box.

Black Sheep

candlestick

see-saw



kettle

Jack's horn

Old Woman's shoe

Draw a line under the right words.

1. Humpty Dumpty sat on a  
ball wall tall fall
2. Jack and Jill went up the  
bill will hill kill
3. Little Boy Blue come blow your  
corn horn born torn

Draw a line under the words that make you think of Boy Blue.

horn	barn	sheep
airplane	sail	ocean
bed	cows	corn
meadow	tree	asleep
haystack	school	hill

Write yes or no in the square.

Little Bopeep

Come blow your horn

Little Jack Horner

Sat in the corner

Mary, Mary

Has lost her sheep



There was an old woman  
Who lived in a shoe

### Summary

After these rhymes have been presented the teacher may help the children compile their "Nursery Rhyme Books." She may also bind the directions, charts, and original stories into separate covers. New rhymes may be added from time to time during the year. These books will be a source of pleasure for the children the remainder of the years. They will help build in the children a wholesome respect for books.

The word cards and other materials may be used at intervals for games and reviews. They are excellent for remedial work. The methods and techniques used may be adapted to other phases of reading.

### Program Which Evolves From Use of Nursery Rhymes

#### Planning the Program

The teachers of the school may meet and plan a program which they will present on "Carnival Night" which is usually in October. This Carnival is under the auspices of the Parent-Teacher Association and the proceeds go to their funds which are used for financing school projects.

The program may be an original play based upon the Nursery Rhyme Characters. The teachers will decide the rhymes for which their room will be responsible. Their choice will be guided by their former teaching. The program may be entitled "A Nursery Rhyme Pantomime." The committees may be appointed: dramatic





and direction, costume, properties, sales and any others that might arise. A teacher may serve as the chairman of a committee allocating the different jobs to dependable parents.

### Values of Program

The program will promote public good will toward the school as parents and other laymen come to appreciate the education received by their children. It will permit informal contact with parents and teachers as they participate. It will allow the school to become a community center. It improves pupil-teacher relationships, problems in discipline fade away under the enthusiasms of cooperative sharing in a situation. It enlists youthful energies and enthusiasms in constructive activities, rather than allowing them to dissipate in frivolous pursuits of delinquent behavior.

### "A Nursery Rhyme Pantomime"

One of the most successful programs for a school gathering is one in which the people in the audience participate as well as those on the stage. There is a great deal of fun in repeating the rhymes while others pantomime them.

The stage is bare except for the chorus (dressed in white robes with red ties) which is seated in a semicircle across the back of the stage. The children taking part in the program are dressed to portray the character they are to represent. They pantomime their part while the appropriate rhyme is spoken or sung. Props are placed inconspicuously upon the stage as each character enters.



Announcer

How many of you remember the best known nursery rhymes?  
We would like for you to show us just what good memories you  
have. We are going to pantomime some rhymes. Please recite  
those you know with the chorus.

Queen of May      Recited

Maid Marian is Queen of the May,  
All good children own her sway;  
Her waist is white, her skirt is red,  
A crown of gold is on her head.

Jack and Jill      Song

Jack and Jill went up the hill,  
To fetch a pail of water;  
Jack fell down and broke his crown  
And Jill came tumbling after.<sup>76</sup>

Jack Be Nimble      Recited

Jack be nimble,  
Jack be quick,  
Jack jump over the candlestick.

Three Little Kittens      Song

Three little kittens,  
They lost their mittens,  
And they began to cry,  
"Oh, mother dear, we sadly fear,  
Our mittens we have lost."

- - - - -

76. Paul Hill, Let's Sing, p. 41.



"What lost your mittens,  
 You naughty kittens,  
 Then you shall have no pie!"

Miew, miew, miew, miew.

Miew, miew, miew, miew.<sup>77</sup>

Old Woman in a Shoe      Recited

There was an old woman  
 Who lived in a shoe  
 She had so many children  
 She didn't know what to do.  
 She gave them all broth  
 Without any bread

And whipped them all soundly  
 And put them to bed.

See-Saw Marjorie Daw      Song

See-saw, Marjorie Daw,  
 Jack shall have a new master,  
 She shall have but a penny a day,  
 Because she won't work any faster.<sup>78</sup>

Polly, Put the Kettle On      Dance

Polly, put the kettle on,  
 Polly, put the kettle on,  
 Polly, put the kettle on,  
 And we'll all have tea.

- - - - -

77. Lloyd J. Dotterer, New Music Hour, p. 6.

78. John W. Beattie, The Golden Book of Favorite Songs, p. 77.



Sukey, take it off again,  
 Sukey, take it off again,  
 Sukey, take it off again,  
 They've all gone away.<sup>79</sup>

Baby Bunting          Song

Bye, Baby Bunting,  
 Daddy's gone a-hunting,  
 To get a little rabbit's skin  
 To wrap his Baby Bunting in.

Simple Simon          Recited

Simple Simon went a-fishing  
 For to catch a whale;  
 All the water that he got  
 Was in his mother's pail!

Little Bobby Snooks          Recited

Little Bob Snooks  
 Was fond of his books,  
 And loved by  
 His usher and master.

And Naughty Jack Spry  
 Got a black eye,  
 And carries his nose  
 In a plaster.

Little Jack Horner          Song

- - - - -

79. Katherine Tyler Wessells, The Golden Song Book, p. 29.





Little Jack Horner sat in a corner,  
 Eating his Christmas pie,  
 He put in his thumb,  
 And pulled out a plum,  
 And said "What a good boy am I."<sup>80</sup>

Wee Willie Winkie          Recited

Wee Willie Winkie runs through the town,  
 Upstairs and downstairs, in his nightgown;  
 Rapping at the window, crying through the lock,  
 "Are the children in their beds? Now it's eight o'clock."

Jack Sprat          Recited

Jack Sprat could eat no fat,  
 His wife could eat no lean,  
 And so, betwixt them both,  
 They licked the platter clean.

Little Jumping Joan          Recited

Here am I, Little Jumping Joan,  
 When nobody's with me, I'm always alone.

Cry Baby Cry          Recited

Cry, Baby, Cry,  
 Put your finger in your eye;  
 Then go and tell your mother it was I.

Little Tommy Tittlemouse          Recited

Little Tommy Tittlemouse  
 Lived in a little house;

- - - - -

80. John W. Beattie, The Golden Book of Favorite Songs, p. 77.



He caught fishes

In other men's ditches.

Beggars Are Coming to Town      Recited

Hark! hark! the dogs do bark,

The beggars are coming to town;

Some in rags, and some in tags,

And some in velvet gowns.

Dr. Foster      Recited

Doctor Foster went to Glo'ster

In a shower of rain;

He stepped in a puddle, up to his middle,

And never went there again.

Bobby Shaftoe      Recited

Bobby Shaftoe's gone to sea,

Silver Buckles on his knee;

He'll come back and marry me,

Pretty Bobby Shaftoe.

Milk Maid      Recited

"Where are you going, pretty maid?"

"I'm going a'milking, sir," she said.

"What is your fortune, my pretty maid?"

"My face is my fortune, sir," she said.

Baa Baa Black Sheep      Song

Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?

Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full!

One for my master, one for my dame,



And one for the little boy that lives in our lane.<sup>81</sup>

To Market, To Market      Recited

To market, to market to buy a fat pig,

Home again, home again, jiggety-jig;

To market, to market to buy a fat hog,

Home again, home again, jiggety-jog.

Dish Ran Away With the Spoon      Song

Hey, diddle, diddle,

The cat and the fiddle,

The cow jumped over the moon;

The little dog laughed to see such sport,

The dish ran after the spoon.<sup>82</sup>

Little Tommy Tucker      Recited

Little Tommy Tucker sings for his supper;

What shall he eat? White bread and butter.

How shall he cut it without e'er a knife?

How shall he marry without e'er a wife?

Little Boy Blue      Song

Little boy blue, come blow your horn,

The sheep in the meadow and cows in the corn,

Where is the boy that looks after the sheep?

He's under the hay stack fast asleep.<sup>83</sup>

Miss Muffet      Song

Little Miss Muffet,

- - - - -

81. Ibid., p. 76.

82. Ibid., p. 76.

83. Paul Hill, Let's Sing, p. 40.



Sat on a tuffet,  
 Eating of curds and whey,  
 Along came a spider  
 And sat down beside her,  
 And frightened Miss Muffet away.<sup>84</sup>

Betty Blue          Recited

Little Betty Blue lost her holiday shoe;  
 What can little Betty do?  
 Give her another to match the other,  
 And then she may walk on two.

Little Bo-Peep          Song

Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep,  
 And can't tell where to find them,  
 Leave them alone,  
 And they'll come home,  
 Wagging their tails behind them.<sup>85</sup>

Crooked Man          Recited

There was a crooked man, and he went a crooked mile,  
 He found a crooked sixpence against a crooked stile;  
 He bought a crooked cat, who caught a crooked mouse,  
 And they all lived together in a little crooked house.

Humpty Dumpty          Song

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,  
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall,

- - - - -

84. Helen Dallman, Nursery Rhymes and Songs, p. 25.

85. John W. Beattie, The Golden Book of Favorite Songs, p. 77.





All the king's horses and all the king's men  
Couldn't put Humpty together again.<sup>86</sup>

Peter Peter          Recited

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater,  
Had a wife and couldn't keep her,  
Put her in a pumpkin shell  
And there he kept her very well.

Finale

Characters Drill

Stand on stage as curtains close.

- - - - -  
86. Hill, op. cit., p. 41.



## CONCLUSIONS

In the study of the value of nursery rhymes in the reading readiness program the following appears to be of fundamental importance:

(1) The nursery rhymes form part of the cultural heritage of every child and have delighted small listeners for generations and we have no right to deprive children of this heritage.<sup>87</sup>

(2) The rhymes widen the child's horizon in many new and fascinating directions. The words in rhymes are richer and more varied than ordinary speech and children are quick to catch and hold the language so used.

(3) The nursery rhymes are sayable, dancible, and playable (to coin some new words), and lend themselves to many forms of expression.<sup>88</sup> They are put together in a pattern to make harmonious sounds and to create lively images. When you give the child the fun of hearing, saying, and playing the rhymes and jingles you plant the seed of pleasure in the power of words and open the gates to the kingdom of books.

(4) The nursery rhymes do not constitute an escape from reality but rather supplement reality. Robert Lynd, in his preface to A. Methuen's "An Anthology of Modern Verse," states that

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87. R. H. Lane, The Teacher in the Modern Elementary School, p. 286.

88. Ibid., p. 286.



"to treat a child without imagination is to treat it without love." Nursery rhymes stimulate the child and make learning as joyous an affair as possible.

(5) Nurserv rhymes have a remarkable social value. Children can view the failure of Boy Blue, the baseless pride of Jack Horner, the carelessness of Polly Flinders, Betty Blue and Lucy Locket, the humane act of Johnny Stout, and the cheerful hospitality of Polly and Sukey. Those may help establish desirable attitudes.

Looking towards the home. The parent in the home has the ideal situation for building a love and a desire for reading. A story is a very intimate experience to the little child and so he wants to be close to the person who reads to him. In school he rarely has the opportunity to sit beside the person who reads to the group. A background of stories and rhymes will give the child many experiences that would otherwise be denied him.

The child is entitled to the best literature available and it is the responsibility of every parent to see that the child has an individual library, even though it be small, of well chosen books, all his own. This will give the child a sense of the value, companionship, and individuality of books. It should never be forgotten that the personally owned books, the little library built gradually, with its associations, this volume a gift from some favorite elder, that perhaps representing self-denial, is a precious possession to a child and a possession



that outlasts its actual and material existence. A small library in the home in this day and age of movies and going somewhere will keep the child's interest and keep him safely at home.

Looking towards the school. The aim of the schools of today should be in turning out happy and intelligent individuals. They should cultivate the imagination, which is a crying need today for both the world and the individual. It is the old rhymes and jingles that first made it possible for the child to enter into the emotions of others. The rhymes enrich the imagination and guild the most sordid surroundings, and provide a means of escape from the commonplace. They broaden the child's mental horizon, taking him where he will find wonder and beauty. The rhymes stimulate the child's desire to read and their reading and dramatization make a happy and intimate experience in his day. Once the child can read he should be encouraged to follow John Cotton Dana's twelve famous rules about reading, given 300 years ago. (1) Read. (2) Read. (3) Read some more. (4) Read everything. (5) Read about everything. (6) Read enjoyable things. (7) Read things you enjoy yourself. (8) Read and talk about it. (9) Read very carefully--some things. (10) Read on the run--most things. (11) Don't think about reading, just (12) Read.

Looking towards the community. The responsibility of the community is to aid and abet the home and school in enabling the child to live and adjust himself to his environment. Every community should have a public library where the child may spend





his leisure time wisely and continue his interest in literature. There should be other agencies such as clubs, church schools, museums, and play schools that encourage intellectual curiosity. It is the obligation of everyone concerned with children to open up for the child the broad world through fascinating books so that he will want to read and that he can read.

It is no simple task, this bringing together of children and the desire to read. It means knowing children and books so thoroughly that we make dreamers to see the wonder and romance of the world about them and the matter of fact child to enter the realm of imaginative literature. It means making the spirit of the past so real that it will help them, as they grow older, to interpret the problems of their everyday life today.



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